



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
GUIDANCE



## TOWN HALL TALKING POINTS

September 2, 2011

In 2009, the Congress passed the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment or MOVE Act to simplify the absentee registration and voting process and increase access to voting materials electronically via the internet and email. We encourage you to use the Federal Voting Assistance Program website, [WWW.FVAP.GOV](http://WWW.FVAP.GOV), which has the forms and information most overseas voters need.

**Our most important message:** If you want to vote, you have to send in a **Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to your local election officials every year – even if you’ve previously voted overseas – and every time you change your name, physical address, or email address.** Use the FPCA to request an absentee ballot, and to register to vote if you’re not currently registered. The easiest way to fill out this form is to use the online tool available at [WWW.FVAP.GOV](http://WWW.FVAP.GOV) that walks you through the process based on your state’s specific voting rules. Fill it out every January first and make this your new New Year’s Resolution!

The fastest way to get your absentee ballot is to request electronic ballot. Depending on the specific rules of your home state, delivery may be made by fax, email, or online download. On the 2005 FPCA, you may request electronic ballot delivery in section 4 of the FPCA, but don’t forget to include your email address or fax number. On the 2011 version of the FPCA, you rank your ballot delivery preference in section 6. Otherwise, your ballot will be mailed to you.

Most states now allow you to send the FPCA electronically to your local election officials, but others still require you to print and mail in a hard copy. The online tool at [WWW.FVAP.GOV](http://WWW.FVAP.GOV) will tell you which method(s) your state permits.

All states now offer a way to verify registration. This is often done by an online verification website or by calling your local election official. This helps confirm you are properly registered and on the list to get absentee ballots. [WWW.FVAP.GOV](http://WWW.FVAP.GOV) provides a link to each state’s online verification website.

Overseas voters are eligible to vote in presidential primary elections and in state primary elections for federal offices (Senator, Representative), as well as the general elections in November 2012. Some states allow overseas voters to vote in state and local elections. The online tool available through [WWW.FVAP.GOV](http://WWW.FVAP.GOV) will let you know in which state and local elections you may vote.

States send out absentee ballots at least 30 days before the primary elections, and 45 days before the November general election. Returning your completed ballot as quickly as possible will ensure it reaches your local election officials before your state’s ballot receipt deadline.

International mail to Hometown, USA takes (XX) weeks. You can also drop off your FPCA or your completed ballot in person at the Embassy, and we’ll mail it to the United States for you. Contact the Consular Section for instructions and hours of operation. Mail sent through the diplomatic pouch takes XX weeks to get to Washington, and another week to reach most U.S. counties. For the pouch, use a postage-paid envelope (or the template available at [WWW.FVAP.GOV](http://WWW.FVAP.GOV)), or affix U.S. postage.

After you send in your completed ballot, you can confirm receipt by your local elections officials online by visiting the website of your state's Secretary of State.

If it's 30 days before Election Day, and you haven't received your ballot, fill out and mail in an emergency write-in ballot -- the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB) which is available at [WWW.FVAP.GOV](http://WWW.FVAP.GOV). You can also drop off your FWAB in person at the Embassy, and we'll mail it to the U.S. for you.

**If asked:**

**Q: How soon can I send in my FPCA? Now?**

A: We recommend sending in your FPCA on or after January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, and every time you change your name, mailing address, or email address.

**Q: I plan to vote absentee from abroad in the primary elections, but will be back in the United States for the November general elections? Do I have to do anything special?**

A: When you fill out your FPCA, include a note to your local election officials that you'll be returning to the United States on xxx date. Once you are back home, contact your local election officials to confirm your new U.S. address and your intention to vote in the United States.

**Q: I'm a U.S. citizen but I've never lived in the United States. Can I vote?**

A: Each state has its own residency requirements relating to voter eligibility. Some states allow voters who have never lived in the United States to use their parents' state of voting residence. It's best to get in touch with local election officials in the place where your parents last lived, or the place where you have visited frequently, to find out if you are eligible to register to vote. FVAP's Voting Assistance Guide will have a section titled **Voting by Citizens Who Have Never Lived in the U.S.** if the state has passed laws allowing these citizens to vote. The Embassy voting assistance officer can help you get in touch with local election officials.

**Q: I haven't lived in the United States for a long time, and don't know what our address was? Can I vote in any state? What do I do?**

A: All voting in the United States is based on your residency. Normally, you'd use the address where you last lived before leaving the United States, even if it was a very long time ago. Someone in your family may have old letters which contain an address. You can also check medical, church, school, or property records, or write to the Social Security Administration.

**Q: What effect does voting have on my U.S. taxes?**

A: U.S. citizens have an obligation to file federal tax returns wherever they live. Voting for candidates for federal offices does not affect your federal or state tax liability. Voting for candidates for state or local offices could affect your state tax liability. Consult legal counsel if you have questions.